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### 39. REDISCOVERY OF A RARE FERN *ARCHNIODES ARISTATA* (FROST. F.) TINDALE FROM KUMAUN HIMALAYA

During the course of a botanical exploration in Kumaun Himalaya, a few specimens of a very interesting fern were collected from Hat near Didihat. After critical study, it was identified as *Archniodes aristata* (Frost. f.) Tindale belonging to the family Aspidiaceae. The collection of this species from Kumaun Himalaya is significant for the fern flora of north-western Himalayas, hence information is provided here on the species.

*A. aristata* (Frost. f.) Tindale, Contr. N.S. Wales Nation Herb. 3: 89, 1961. *Polypodium aristatum* Frost., Prod., 82, 1786. *Lastrea aristata* Moore, Ind. Fil., 85, 1856. *Aspidium aristatum* Clarke, Trans. Linn. Soc. Lond. II Bot. 1: 511, 1880 (excl. vars.).

(For description see Jamir and Rao, FERNS OF NAGALAND: 336. 1988).

**Ecology:** An extremely rare fern and is nowhere common in the Western Himalaya. It usually grows on moist and humus-rich dark shaded, forest floor, near Hat at 1300 m, and generally sporulates during the month of August.

**Specimens examined:** Kumaun Himalaya, Pithoragarh district, Hat near Didihat (1300 m), H.C. Pande 24, dated 26 September 1989. Voucher specimens are deposited in Herbarium, Department of Botany, Kumaun University Campus, Almora.

**Distribution:** INDIA: Western Himalaya; rare in Kumaun West, Eastern Himalaya; S. India; Burma, Sri Lanka, China, W. Australia, Polynesia, Malaya

Peninsula and Island, Japan.

The occurrence of this species in north-western Himalayas was reported by Hooker (from Kumaun), MacDonel (from Chamba) vide Hope 1903, and Trotter (from Kashmir) vide Stewart 1945. In 1906 Duthie also reported this species from Kumaun on the authority of Hooker. Recently, Dhir (1980) in FERNS OF NORTH-WESTERN HIMALAYAS and Pande (1990) in CENSUS OF KUMAUN FERNS included this species on the basis of the earlier records. Dixit (1984) also did not mention the distribution of this species in north-western Himalayas. Thus it is clear that none of the subsequent workers could collect this species from any part of north-western Himalayas after Hooker, Trotter and MacDonel. Our collection in 1989 was thus after a long gap. It is in danger of extinction in the Kumaun Himalaya. Therefore, steps should be taken immediately for its conservation. As ferns are very sensitive to habitat destruction, habitat preservation is the only suitable conservation method to protect these plants. Simultaneously efforts should be made to transplant them wherever their peculiar niches are available. This taxon should be incorporated in the National list of Endangered species.

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